

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT

illycaffè:

SUSTAINABILITY YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

In pioneering the modern espresso preparation method some 75 years ago, Francesco Illy made paramount the concept of balance. He understood how only the ideal meeting of bean, heat, pressure and time could draw perfection in a cup — and toiled in passionate pursuit until he knew he'd found it.

Balance became the guiding principle in the company Illy would found, and today, illycaffè is the recognized global leader in coffee quality and responsible practices, from bean to cup. It beats at the heart of illycaffè's deeply felt and long held mission: achieving perfection.

That passion for perfect balance is in evidence today at every Michelin-starred restaurant that brings only illy to the table. It is equally apparent in the Trieste, Italy, company's long-running commitment to sustainability — a commitment central to its business model, and that long predates any faddish use of the term.

At illycaffè, sustainability means recognizing and balancing the long-term economic and social needs of every stakeholder in the production process, while assuring viability of the ecosystems where coffee is harvested. "It's a long-term process in which coffee cultivation, respect for man and the environment, and responsible technology all play a leading role," says Andrea Illy, the company's Chairman and CEO. "It means committing to principles, places and peoples, and keeping those promises."

Sustaining quality starts at the source. Illycaffè's decades-long partnerships with qualified growers from around the world have provided the expertise necessary to produce the finest arabica coffee possible, and the means to prosper by guaranteeing a profit for each crop. Illycaffè purchases all of its green coffee directly from its growers, at prices at least 30 percent higher than international market prices.



To celebrate the contribution of its coffee-growing communities, illycaffè launched "In Principio" — a photographic journey by award-winning photographer Sebastião Salgado, spotlighting the culture of the growers, their history, customs and landscapes.

Photo: In Principio, Sebastião Salgado/Amazonas



The effects have been profound. Illycaffè's nearly 20-year collaboration with growers in Ethiopia — the birthplace of coffee — has brought electricity to some 60,000 people and helped distribute medicine, build roads, and establish a national TV station. At work are dollars illycaffè injects into local economies both through bean purchase and through charitable initiatives like its Cup of Kindness program, committed to building schools where there are none.

More fundamentally, illycaffè provides what growers most need to prosper long-term: training in the latest cultivation and production processes. Each year, the company's Università del Caffè program furthers the knowledge and skills of many of its growers, technical specialists and other coffee chain professionals. Separately, illycaffè-employed agronomists log roughly 300 days annually traveling the world, training coffee producers on the use of environmentally sound techniques such as energy conservation and recycling of waste products and waste water.

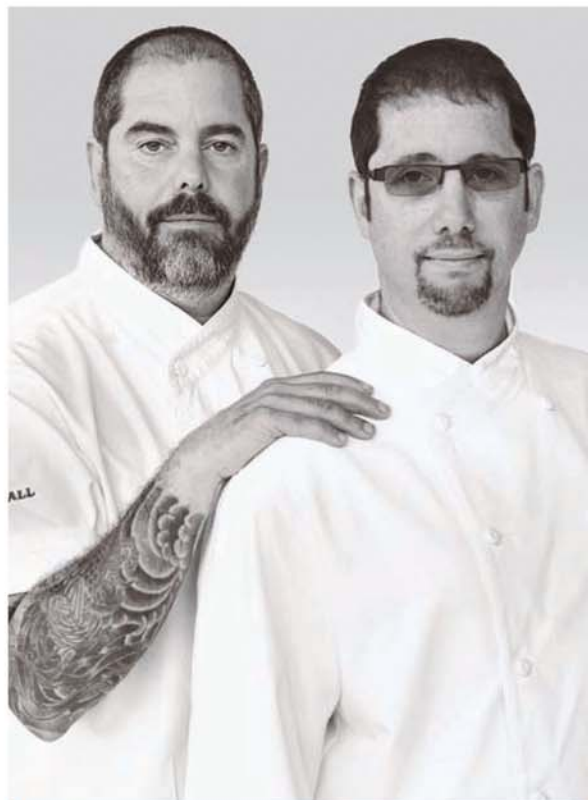
Illycaffè's efforts extend to the macro economy. Its annual Quality Awards, offering cash prizes for producing to highest standards, have helped develop entire coffee growing regions, most notably in remote parts of Brazil, and vividly illustrate how quality and sustainability best walk hand in hand.

Marrying technology with nature to optimal effect is standard operating procedure at illycaffè, and what drives its industry-leading environmental practices. Illycaffè's efforts are recognized by the world's leading authorities, with certifications ranging from Qualité France and EMAS to ISO 9001 and 14001 — testament to the company's elevating standards in emissions, energy consumption and recycling.

Illycaffè's environmental milestones are many. In 2003, the company opened its ultra-low-smoke roasting facility, emitting no more than 1/20th of the legal limit. The company's long-time, integrated agricultural approach minimizes water consumption. Its signature, tin-plated, recyclable steel can became the symbol for the ambitious Recycle for London initiative.

Looking forward, illycaffè has joined with Oxford University Centre for the Environment in an ambitious research project, studying global coffee production to identify the most sustainable cultivation system possible for each growing context, with applications to other crop systems. In collaboration with global certifying partners, illycaffè is working to guarantee its sustainable development policy, with industry-wide supply chain implications.

Ultimate proof of the illycaffè proposition resides in the cup itself. The Rosenthal brothers (Mitchell and Steven) of San Francisco's famed



San Francisco's renowned Rosenthal brothers — Mitchell and Steven — serve only illy at their restaurants, citing the Trieste, Italy company's dual commitments to quality and responsible production.

Town Hall restaurant say it best: "We enjoy helping our customers make new discoveries and connections. Having a kitchen that practices sustainability is a big part of that, which is why illy is more than our coffee — it's our inspiration." ■